

Castlemaine Naturalist

February '95
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A Visit to Wood's Point in Early December

A few days in Cabins overlooking the headwaters of the Goulbourne river, a couple of kilometres upstream from the settlement, revealed some interesting bird activity. King Parrots were everywhere, usually feeding from special seed troughs constructed from the dead limbs of eucalypts, which blended well into the surroundings. These were set up in front of the cabins and throughout the town or nearby residents' homes, and were also visited by Crimson Rosellas, Kookaburras and Pied Currawongs - a great attraction for walkers on the Alpine Walking Track (which terminates at Woods Point I believe) - especially for overseas visitors.

In the early morning a pair of Flame Robins were around and a short walk along the river bank surprised a pair of Sacred Kingfishers. The walking tracks and roads around the mountains were lined with masses of bright yellow blooms of the Mountain Bitter-pea, some specimens as large as wattle trees (15 - 20 feet).

Wombats were very much in evidence as is usual during the breeding season. Similar to foxes, they are rather reckless at that time of year, and could often be seen around in daylight hours ambling along bush tracks as we drove up into the mountains on Licola Road. The forests of Alpine Ash and Messmate are magnificent - despite the frequency of fires. The Mt Singleton and Selma Range have stands of the largest Snow Gums I have ever seen, and obviously haven't been burned.

With the arrival of S.E.C. power recently Wood's Point is expecting many more visitors, and (unfortunately, perhaps) a revival of gold mining activities.

Shirley Parnaby.

N.W. Tasmania

Our trip to Tasmania in August was quite different from what I had expected. We had our usual vague "itinerary", which is, "there's certain places that we want to see, certain things we want to do" and load up the car including the tent "just in case", because we almost never book ahead. The only bookings were for the ferry, and that was an experience

in itself, especially getting up at 1/4 to 6 and watching dolphins swimming alongside the wake of the ship.

When we arrived in Devonport we decided to head straight for Stanley - a bit silly as we were both extremely tired, and we found later that there is a very good caravan park in Devonport (three, in fact).

We stayed four nights in Stanley, then headed for Deloraine, passing through Table Cape on the way so that I could have a look at the lighthouse which features in a painting Doug gave me years ago. I'm glad we did as it was near here I solved the problem of the call similar to the White-eared Honeyeater. It was the endemic Yellow-throated Honeyeater. We stayed overnight in a motel in Deloraine (our only motel for the trip) that had magnificent views of the Western Tiers through the unit window, before heading (last minute decision) over the central plateau and past Great Lake on our way to Hobart. It was well worth while for the views, and there was snow high up. The snow was magnificent under the trees and around the lake, though there was not enough to close the road. We stayed 5 nights near Hobart at Berriedale, mostly indulging in touristy things, then, one night in Pontville in four star Colonial Accommodation gratis (the Cottages belong to a friend and they had been hoping we'd stay with them the whole time we were in Hobart!).

From there we went to Coles Bay and the Freycinet Penninsular where we walked over to the beautiful Wineglass Bay; then Launceston and finishing in Devonport for the last few days, using it as a base to visit another friend at whose place, on a ridge high above the river just south of Burnie, I saw my first live Tasmanian Devils and a poteroo, and to visit Cradle Mountain and walk around Dove Lake.

The special place of the trip for me was Stanley in the northwest, which is still unspoiled, though it is being "discovered".

The drive from Devonport was most enjoyable as we followed the coast as far as possible. Penguin was a delight with its "oasis" of flowers planted along the narrow gauge railway line. Burnie is very industrial, so we just passed straight through. Ulverstone we enjoyed - especially Doug. He found a good antique book shop there! From there the road wound round and over hills, past dairy herds of black and white dairy shorthorns, and down onto rivers lined with melaleucas and wattles. Lovely country, and we were both too tired to be bothered stopping to take photos. We would do it on the way back. It was raining when we drove back! The drive into Stanley along the isthmus towards the Nut in the late afternoon, gave a feeling of unreality. We got a cabin on the beach front and could look out onto the beach through the back window, but, as we found all over the area of Tassie where we went, there weren't many birds to be seen.

We climbed the Nut (and made good use of the chain provided, especially on the way back down) and walked around the track at the top. The vegetation seems to be mainly the broad leaved "tussock" and

gorse, though there were a few blackwoods and prickly shrubs. Under the tussocks were many mutton bird burrows, which looked as if they were beginning to be used. We were caught in a hail shower on the far side, but it was worthwhile just to watch it approaching as we stood on the cliff top. The play of light and shadow over the water was really beautiful.

For the historically minded, Stanley is of great interest. Highfield House, just 4 km from the township, is now being restored by the National Trust. It is a lovely old home built in 1840 for the Governor of the Van Diemens Land Company and the outbuildings are also in quite good condition. The old trees in the grounds are worth a visit themselves. (Underneath we found dozens of bandicoot burrows, but didn't spot the owners).

The old VDL warehouse is down on the waterfront and is still used. There are a number of interesting old buildings in the township, including one cottage where Joe Lyons was born and one where he spent his childhood.

One day was devoted to a cruise on the Arthur River and we left Stanley about 8 o'clock to be there in plenty of time. It's nowhere near as up-market as the Franklin cruises, but we enjoyed it. As we puttered up the swollen river between steep banks clothed in several different wattles, eucalypts, myrtle-beech and many tree ferns the captain neatly dodged logs floating down towards us. The water was quite brown with tannin as is common in this part of Tasmania. We went as far as the confluence of the Arthur and the Frankland rivers and tied up at a tiny landing, and while the cook got a barbecue lunch ready for us we went for a walk in the rainforest. We couldn't do the whole circuit because of the rain and the slippery track, but we enjoyed what we did see, and enjoyed our lunch, too. As we left the spot I got a fleeting glimpse of the Pink Robin which lives there. When we were nearly back to the settlement of Arthur River we were met by the White-bellied Sea Eagle whose nest we'd seen earlier. She gets a titbit of meat every day and waits for the boat when she knows it's due. She is always reluctant to fly down at first which meant that while the boat circled we got a marvellous view of her and even managed a couple of reasonable slides and video shots. She has apparantly been meeting the boat for the last seven years, and has gone through four mates and raised several families in that time. She'd just lost her last mate four days before we were there. He was only young and being inexperienced got caught by the waves while fishing in wild surf. Some of the locals saw it happen and went tearing off to the beach in their four-wheel drives, but they were too late to save him. They're pretty philosophical about it, and say that she will raise this chick and then go off and find another mate. She's done it before.

There has been a reasonable rainfall around the northwest, but where ever else we went, especially on the east coast, there were obvious signs

that drought was a reality in Tasmania, too.

As I said earlier, the lack of bird numbers surprised me, though I did see some of the endemic species such as the Tasmanian Native Hen, including chicks, Black Currawongs, Forest Ravens, Yellow Wattlebirds, Green Rosellas, Clinking Currawong, Black-headed Honeyeater, Beautiful Firetail, Yellow-throated Honeyeater, and I like to think that the pardelote-like call that fell instead of rising might have belonged to the Forty-spotted Pardelote! It was the right area, on the peninsula opposite Bruney Island. The birds that were most common in the north-west were Starlings and Goldfinches, and Masked Lapwings were as common as Magpies here. We only saw one Magpie there, and only 8 for the whole time we were in Tasmania.

We've promised ourselves another trip soon. I want to visit Bruney Island next time, and we didn't get to Ross either, which is where Doug had wanted to visit. I think we should have started all this about 30 years ago!

Rita Mills

Fryerstown Bird List for 1994

() indicates birds seen in other years but not '94 to the beginning of December.

Honeyeaters,	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike >6
Red wattlebird >12	Rufous Whistler >2
Fuscous >40	White-throated Tree-creeper >8
White-plumed >30	Brown Tree-creeper >5
White-naped >10	(Orange, Varied, Sitella)
Brown-headed >5	<i>Common Starling</i> >2
Yellow-tufted >10	<i>Blackbird</i> >2
Yellow-faced >5	Superb Blue Wren >10
White-eared >4	Yellow Robin >5
Eastern Spinebill >2	Redbrowed Finch >20
(New Holland)	White-browed Scrub Wren >5
Regent >2	(Speckled Warbler) >2
Painted >2	Scarlet Robin >3
Black 2	Spotted Pardalote >4
Pallid Cuckoo >2	Silvereye >2
Fantailed Cuckoo >2	Mistletoe Bird >2
Shining Bronze Cuckoo >2	Buff-rumped Thornbill >15
(Rainbow Bee-eater) 3-50	Brown Thornbill >10
Crested Shrike-tit >2	Striated Thornbill >10
Grey Shrike Thrush >4	Yellow-rumped Thornbill >6
Olive-backed Orlole 2	Jacky Winter >2

Observations for December/January

*Tawny Frogmouth set up nest in a stupid position last year and the young one fell out of the nest, but this year they have nested in the same

place and have successfully raised two young. I.A.

* Wallaby Grass flowering in December. E.P.

* Hyacinth Orchids were flowering in Kaweka. F.B.

* It was noted that Calistemons were flowering profusely this year, but few orchids.

* Pied Stilts seen at Joyces Creek, early December. K.T.

* 100's of Pied Stilts seen at a reserve just south of Willaura about the same time. R.M.

* Shining Bronze Cuckoo seen on Barkers Ck. off Gingell St. M.W.

* The Cisticola mentioned in the last Castlemaine Naturalist was the Golden Headed Cesticola.

* Two White-fronted Chat nests were seen at North Harcourt. I.P.

* Olive-backed Orioles' nest seen on the Ballarat outing. E.P.

* Rainbow Bee-eaters seen at Harcourt at the end of November. I.P.

* 27th Nov - Indian Mynah seen at Wheeler St. G.B.

* Jan. - a flock of Indian Mynahs, same place!

* Nankeen Night Heron roosting on the island in the lake at the Botanic Gardens. S.P.

* Many Ibis seen between Ballan and Daylesford. F.D.

* Pair of Masked Lapwings at Kyneton have raised four young in the herb garden belonging to Kaliana. K.M.

* 200 Little Ravens feeding with Straw-necked and White ibis at Mt Alexander at 8 in the morning. E.P.

* About 30 Pink-eared ducks at Lake Linlithgow (between Penshurst and Dunkeld) in mid-Jan. A young Pallid Cuckoo and foster parents, a pair of White-plumed Honeyeaters, at Hamilton on Grange Burn, also a family of water rats just a little further down the Burn. R.M.

* A bright yellow Musk Lorikeet, with the red face markings of the species, feeding in a plum tree with a flock of normally coloured Musks in Campbell St. K.T.

* Platypus seen on the Loddon. M.O. Further discussion suggested that they are reasonably common in the area being seen in Barkers Ck. in several locations, Campbells Ck. and other places on the Loddon.

* Musk Lorikeets have been seen eating even green fruit this year. E.P.

* Seen on a holiday to the High Plains in January - Gang Gang Cockatoos, Chestnut-rumped Thornbills, Rufous Fantail, Flame Robins. E.P.

* An Australian Hobby was seen near the Camp Reserve, flying towards the same clump of trees where a pair nested last year. S.B.

* A comparison of rainfall - Jan - 14 Dec 1993 - 642mm

Jan - 14 Dec 1994 - 252mm. F.B.

Sandon Bird List for November

Australasian Grebe

White-faced Heron

Little Black Cormorant

Pacific Black Duck

Little Eagle
 Brown Falcon
 Masked Lapwing
 Galah
 Sulphur Crested Cockatoo
 Crimson Rosella
 Eastern Rosella
 Red-rumped Parrot
 Pallid Cuckoo
 Shining Bronze Cuckoo
 Southern Boobook Owl (h)
 Aust. Owlet Nightjar (h)
 Kookaburra
 Welcome Swallow
 Richard's Pipit
 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
 Scarlet Robin
 Jacky Winter
 Rufous Whistler
 Grey Shrike-thrush
 Restless Flycatcher
 Grey Fantail
 Willy Wagtail
 White-browed Babbler
 Wren

Weebill
 Brown,
 Buff-rumped,
 Yellow-rumped,
 Yellow,
 Striated, Thornbills
 White-throated Tree-creeper
 Red Wattlebird
 Yellow-faced,
 White-eared,
 Yellow-tufted,
 White-plumed,
 Brown Headed, Honeyeaters
 Mistletoe Bird
 Spotted Pardalote
 Striated Pardalote
 Silvereye
 European Goldfinch
 White-winged Chough
 Australian Magpie-lark
 Dusky Woodswallow
 Magpie
 Grey Currawong
 Australian Raven

61 Hunter Street, Dec '94, Jan 95

The pair of Eastern Rosellas were successful in raising three of the five nestlings which hatched in the bird box erected in a large old pepper tree in our back yard. The two which perished were almost fully fledged, and probably died because of the extremely hot weather at that time and crowded conditions in the box. Other birds which appeared with young have been New Holland Honeyeaters, Rufous Whistler, and wrens. A juvenile Pied Currawong made several visits to the ripe apricots, as did Silvereye and Red Wattlebird families. At the bird bath were Goldfinches, Spinebills, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Red-browed Firetails and, for the first time, a Brown Tree-creeper. The solitary Common Bronzewing continues to forage under the wattle tree, and flocks of Musk Lorikeets have been feeding in nearby eucalypts for several weeks.

For about three weeks a pair of frantic Blue Wrens have been feeding a juvenile Horsefields Bronze Cuckoo – possibly the offspring of the adult being harassed by thornbills as reported in my September notes. The young bird is easily identified from the illustrations in Slater's bird book, having a rufous base to the sides of the tail and pale stripe around the eye.

Shirley Parnaby

Great Dividing Trail Public Walks

NOTE! These walks will NOT go ahead on days of TOTAL FIRE BAN.

Sat. Feb. 18: Blowhole to Tipperary Loop (12km)

Starts at 9.30 and finishes mid afternoon at the Blowhole near Hepburn Springs (take the road out of Hepburn Springs towards Newstead, turn left into 18th Street and keep following the signs to the Blowhole). The easy to medium walk follows mining water races for much of the day, and will include lunch at Tipperary Mineral Spring, and several chances for a swim. Led by Joel Jackson.

Fri. Mar. 17: Full Moon Night Walk : Tipperary to Daylesford (5.5km)

Starts 8.30pm at Tipperary Spring (follow the signs after turning right just out of Daylesford on Ballarat Road). Car Shuffle from the Daylesford Boathouse at 8.15pm. Led by Pat Conroy. Finish approx 10pm.

Sun. Mar 19: Blackwood Spring to the Tunnel Loop (12km)

Starts 9.30am and finishes mid afternoon at the Blackwood Mineral Springs (follow the signs to the Spring from the centre of Blackwood township). This walk is a good way to safely sample the grandeur of the upper part of Lerderderg Gorge, via the Tunnel Point (ridge) Track and back along Byers Back Track mining race. Apart from a short steep section down to the Lerderderg River for lunch at the Tunnel, this is a good family walk, and if there is still water in the Lerderderg there are two chances for a swim. Leader Doug Ralph.

Sat. Apr. 22: Creswick Water Walk.

A repeat of one of last year's walks, including lakes and forest in the Creswick area.

More details of this and the many later walks are in the groups Autumn Newsletter. If you are not a member and would like to be the secretary has an application form. Membership is \$15 and covers a full year from the date of joining. The project is an ambitious one and needs support.

Objectives for the next twelve months include -

- * Completing the on-ground track and signage for Phase 1 (Castlemaine to Daylesford section), with assistance from federal employment initiatives, such as JobSkills, LEAP etc.
- * Seeking DCNR and local government funding for development and maintenance.
- * Producing and publishing maps of the Castlemaine to Daylesford section, at 1:25,000 scale, after and investigation of costing and the possibility of sponsorship.
- * Confirming and obtaining all relevant approvals of the route of the entire trail with the relevant authorities.
- * Conducting working bees as required to develop and upgrade sections of the track.
- * Developing consistent signage and design policy for the entire trail system.
- * To conduct monthly guided walks for members of the public.
- * To establish a new, trail dedicated campsite at Middleton's Ck. with DCNR approval and support.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

N.B. Excursions leave promptly at times stated.

General Meetings are held at Continuing Education, Templeton Street. .

Friday Feb 10 Annual Meeting. Speaker, Bill Holsworth, Bendigo F.N.C. Bats of Central Victoria.

Sat. Feb. 11 Birds and Pondlife, Barkers Creek Res., N. Harcourt. Leader R Mills.

Thurs Feb 16 CFNC/U3A birdwatching. Leader, G Broadway.

Sun Mar. 5 Insects Excursion with Entymological Group of Field Naturalist's Club of Victoria. Meet at the Rose Gardens Car Park in the Castlemaine Gardens at 10.30am. Look for insects under guidance of members of FNCV. All CFNC members invited.

Fri. Mar 10. Land for Wildlife. Speaker, Peter Morrison.

Sat Mar 11. Outing t.b.a.

Friday March 10 to Monday March 13. VFNCA and WVFNCA combined Campout at Portland. Venue, Karnkendi Conference Centre, Wade St, Nelson. Details and registration forms at General Meeting

Friday *April 21 Astronomy Night at Vaughan Springs. Speaker and Leader, John Bradfield. Meet at Cont. Ed at 8 o'clock. Bring Binoculars, telescopes. Also if you have planispheres or any bits of astronomical equipment you want explained bring them too. If overcast the program will be at Cont. Ed.

* Note change of date.

Sat. May 13 Terrick Terrick. All day excursion.

Fri. July 14 Some District Birds Several members will be taking part.

Sat. Sept. 23 Excursion to Castlemaine by the Botany Group of Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.

Sat. Nov. 4 at 10am. Kalimna Walk with the Gardens Festival.

Committee: B. Maund (Pres.), B. Envall (V.P.), M. Willis (Sec.), G. Broadway (Treas.), K. Turner (Prog.), R.Mills (P.O. & N/L Ed.), E. Perkins, M. Oliver, S. Parnaby, C. Morris, K. Meehan, M. Hunter, and S. Bruton.

Meetings:-

General - Second Friday every month (except Jan) at Continuing Education, Templeton St. at 8 pm.

Business - Held on the 4th Thursday every month (except Dec.) at 38 Campbell Street at 7.30pm. All Members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions - 1994. Ordinary Membership: Single \$14, Family \$20

Pensioner/Student: Single \$10, Family \$16. Supporting: \$25

Newsletter posted: Membership + \$6. - The Committee recommends that the Subscriptions remain the same for 1995.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club Inc.

P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.